EROCIPS
Emergency Response to coastal Oil, Chemical and Inert Pollution from Shipping

Supported by the European Union
Project co-financed by the ERDF

WP 1: Pollution Threats

Task 1.2: Past Incident Review

Version:	Final version
Last updated on:	16/01/07
Author:	GA-MF/ Intecmar-Cetmar
Responsible:	INTECMAR
Involved partners:	All the Erocips partners
Approved by Steering Group on:	15/03/07

1. Introduction

The Atlantic area of the European Union has been the scene of a number of well-known shipping incidents over the last 30 years. In considering the environmental and economic costs of those incidents, it is clearly important to learn lessons from them in order to prevent their repetition and to better deal with such events in the future.

Several international organisations have elaborated and maintained databases of oil spills from tankers, combined carriers and barges, and used them to generate statistics on numbers and sizes of spills and to identify causes of spills (International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited (ITOPF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Cedre, Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), etc.) These databases usually recover all the information related to major maritime incidents. In those cases the incident is usually well documented and contains information on both the spill itself and the response actions. However, it is important to recognise that major incidents are relatively rare events and in most cases incidents are small.

Maritime incidents are usually the result of a combination of actions and circumstances that will influence the impact degree. Each past incident has demonstrated the strain that can be placed on regional and local government resources and management structures as responders attempt to limit the impact caused by the pollution on the shoreline assets of a coastal area. Although damaging, each of these events has also provided those involved with experience of how to deal with such an incident.

The goal of the EROCIPS project is the formulation of a transferable methodology that communicates relevant information to responders and decision-makers involved in shoreline counter-pollution operations following a shipping incident. In this context, the compilation of lessons learnt from past incidents constitutes a useful tool for the better preparation of local and regional administrations involved in contingency plans.

2. Objective

The main objective of this task was to gather information on maritime pollution incidents, covering major through to minor events, that have impacted upon Atlantic area coastlines, paying particular attention to the lessons learnt by the local administrations that responded to these incidents and how these can be incorporated within the EROCIPS project.

3. Methodology

In order to compile information about past maritime pollution incidents that have impacted upon Atlantic area coastlines, a questionnaire was prepared and EROCIPS partners involved in WP 1 were invited to complete it. The questionnaire was divided into different sections, which recovered information about:

- ship identification
- ship features
- a brief summary of the accident
- communications during the incident
- a pollution report (at sea)
- a pollution report (on land)
- meteorological and hydrodynamic conditions
- the product
- removed pollution
- an impact description
- counter-measures

- the administrations and other types of organisations involved in crisis management and response operations
- claim management
- a follow-up of environmental damage
- restoration measures
- lessons learnt
- costs and compensation assessment
- references and links
- other remarks
- key words.

A database was established to collate the information on past maritime pollution incidents recovered from the different regions. The information collected covers major to minor incidents.

4. Compiled information on past incidents in the EROCIPS region

A summary of the number of past incidents documented by each of the countries involved in the EROCIPS project is shown in table 1.

Country	W.D.	D.	P.D.	Remarks
France	42			Only major incidents reported
Portugal			144	Major, minor and local incidents
Spain	3	5	60	Mainly port incidents reported
U.K.			8	Only major incidents reported

Table 1. Number of incidents reported by country. W.D.: well documented (when more than 80% of the questionnaire was completed). D.: documented (when approximately 50% of the questionnaire was completed). P.D.: poorly documented (when less than 30% of the questionnaire was completed).

All the cases recovered can be seen in the Excel database in Annex 1 of this document.

Several difficulties were found in compiling the past incident information. The information was, in general, scarce, poorly documented and dispersed. Furthermore, no uniform format was found, so it was difficult to compare data from different organisations.

When referring to major incidents, most relevant information was already available in the oil spill databases developed by international organisations. In relation to minor incidents, these were generally poorly documented if at all. Moreover, local authorities were in some cases reluctant to provide or even to record such data.

Looking at the information recovered from each country:

- In the case of France, the institution “Le Cedre” has one of the best incident databases. It is focused mainly on major incidents. All the reported cases are very well documented and contain information on the different aspects of the incident: ship characteristics, meteorological and oceanographic data at that moment, causes of the incident, incident consequences and after-spill actions.
- In the case of Portugal, numerous local incidents have been reported containing information about the location of the incident, quantity spilled and product spilled. Although information is scarce, it reflects that it is at least recorded and accessible.
- In the case of Galicia (Spain), it was difficult to recover local information mainly due to: (a) the information being spread out in different databases (sometimes only in

paper format and not in electronic form) and (b) local authorities being in some cases reluctant to provide information about incidents. In this sense, very few incidents are really documented for this area.

- In the case of the U.K., although it is presumable that records on maritime incidents exist, they are not easily available. Only poorly documented information about some major incidents could be compiled.

In general, it can be said that the recovered information was unbalanced between the different regions. A good database on maritime incidents is only available for France. Nevertheless, in our opinion the obtained information is not a reliable reflection of the information that exists in the different countries. On the contrary, it reflects that such information is recovered in different formats and is quite inaccessible to the general public.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Considering the information found and collected, it is observed that medium and minor incidents are not routinely documented in an exhaustive way by regional and local authorities. Moreover, a uniform form to collect this information does not exist and, therefore, it is difficult to use the information to prevent and to minimise the effects of future accidents.

Considering the framework that the EROCIPS project brings to the development of tools to be used by regional and local administrations to fight against maritime pollution, some recommendations can be made:

- It is recommended that all the relevant information about the circumstances that surround an accident is collected and documented. This practice can help, in a decisive way, to prevent and to minimise the effect of future accidents.
- The registration of information about incidents should not be seen as a reflection of bad practices but, on the contrary, as a reflection of good practices focused on better handling of future incidents. Moreover, it can help to value the damages and losses caused by an incident as well as help to detect the existence of possible negligence and to resolve responsibilities.
- The recovering of information about incidents should be carried out in as uniform a way as possible along all the coastal regions. This uniformity will facilitate the exchange of information, which is crucial for good co-operation in the fight against maritime accidents.
- Keeping in mind that collecting information about incidents is time consuming for staff, it is recommended that a template be used to recover information so as to facilitate the work of the personnel in charge. This template should contain the minimum information that is required so as to be able to document appropriately the accident and the circumstances that surround it. In this sense, Annex 2 of this report presents a model of a template designed according to different models that are widely used and that can be utilised for collecting incident information. The incident report has been divided into two sections: the incident report itself and the post incident report. This last section recovers information about the impact produced by the incident and the post incident management.
- Finally, it is advisable to periodically analyse the information collected concerning incidents (the frequency of the analysis being based on the number and severity of the incidents). This analysis can present the opportunity to take opportune measures that help to diminish, as far as possible, the number of incidents and to minimise their effects.